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THE MINUTE MAN

A BALLAD OF

"The Shot heard Round the World"

BY

MARGARET SIDNEY

BOSTON
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THE MINUTE MAN.

THE MINUTE MAN.

FOR more than a hundred years
In history, legend, and rhyme,
Has the old story been told anew
Of the Century's deed sublime.

On this Memorial Day,
When the grateful hearts of all,
Recounting the struggle for Liberty,
The Nation's birth recall,

We tell the story once more
  Of that brave and early fight,
When young America stood to her guns,
  With trust in the God of right.

We sing the old, old story
To the children of our time,
Of the Minute Man at Concord Bridge —
Again in simple rhyme.

I.

The scattered hamlet, listening
To the river's melody
Slow-pulsing, even, sweet,
Like dream of heaven, fair paradise,
With forests grand, and fertile fields,
Is blessed, safe retreat.

To weary pilgrims, tossed upon
A sea of conflict, stormy, rough,
Who waves of trouble breast,
Musket-a-quid seems fair indeed.
They bare the brow, and fervently
Thank God that here they rest.

They settle here, and honestly
They purchase land by river,
  Requiting Indian toil.
And peacefully, 'neath Jethro's Oak,
So runs the legend, springs the name
  Which blesses all the soil.

Fair Concord! fitting spot to be
The Nation's birthplace, lovingly
  Is given to thee the fame
Of leading in the Right, that long
As Liberty has voice to speak,
  Shall halo thy dear name.

II.

A cloud descends the vale,
The pine-crowned crests
Repeat an echo warningly;
A cry, that were not God their God,
Would make those settlers quail.

The hurrying, threatening cloud scarce waits
For prayers ascending to the God who led
the Pilgrims forth.
"To arms! To arms! They come! They
come!"
Is heard the cry,
And quick as lightning on his smoking steed
A messenger must fly
To waken all that valley sweet
Lying in blessed, cool retreat.

III.

Over the highway old,
With banner, and song, and jest,
In uniform gay, eight hundred strong
Are marching out toward the West.

Beaming is now the sun
With healing in each bright ray,
The earth is waking to life anew
This beautiful April Day.

Nature is smiling sweet
From meadow, and wood, and hill,
And a simple task it seems to be
To conquer this hamlet still.

Passing the jest along,
The jubilant host march on
To the easy honor of victory
Like that of Lexington.

Swiftly the message ran
Through villages on its way,
Bringing the minute men instantly,
To hold the town that day.

Quietly on the hill,
Drawn back from river and road,
These yeomen gather from plough and field,
To wait alone with God.

Bravely the words that come,
Pealing down these hundred years,
Voicing their trust in the God of might,
And ringing into our ears.

Fearless and faithful words,
Hear them so martial and clear:
"Let us stand our ground, and if we die,
Praise God, we will die right here."

Fiercely rages beneath
  Destruction and pillage dire;
Liberty's signal crashes and falls,
  Destroyed in the vandal's fire.

Waiting, the minute men
  "In the fear of God" on the hill
Calming the hot blood patiently,
  Are holding their rifles still.

Hardest of all to wait,
  To say coolly, one by one,
"We will never fire a single shot
  Unless first fired upon."

Listen! sharp the command!
  Bayonet and gun in place,
The rallying-point of the Nation's war,
  The old North Bridge, they face.

Holding war-council there,
  On God they trustingly wait;
Sublimely the Century keeps for them
  A grand and glorious fate.

Single the shot — a volley!
  Two minute men fall — are dead;
Now speaks America in her guns,
  The waiting-time is fled!

Faithfully now they fight,
  Freedom is theirs at last,
The tyrant's hold is loosening now,
  The die of war is cast!

Clinching the trusty gun,
  Keenly sighting the foe,
With muscles unbound from the long restraint,
  They lay the enemy low.

Sharply rings the battle.
  While the river rolls between,
Hushing its gentle murmuring as
  It plays over banks of green.

Quickly give o'er — 'tis done,
  Provincials are masters of war;
Flee while you may, O brilliant foe,
  Report to your King afar!

Hurried now the retreat,
  Scarce hoping a life to save,
While two dead faces by river's brim
  Wait for a nameless grave.

Sacred the victory
Here won for liberty;
  Ages shall sound,
Concord, thy patriot blood
Baptizing river sod
  Holiest ground.

Here stands the Minute Man,
As from his plough he ran,
Calm and unflinching,
  Yet meek in his glory,
Granite and bronze
  Tell again the grand story;
So shall he ever be
Herald of Liberty!